



OFFICE OF THE  
WATER DEPARTMENT  
TOWN HALL, 511 MAIN STREET  
DUNSTABLE, MA 01827-1313  
(978) 649-4514 FAX (978) 649-8893  
waterdept@dunstable-ma.gov

**Water Commission Minutes**  
**Wednesday, November 3, 2021**

**Approved: 11/24/21**

John O'Brien called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm  
Other member(s) present: Mat Morton  
Meeting held: Virtually via Zoom, Zoom ID 831 5841 7613  
In attendance: Brian Palaia, Town Administrator; Harold Simmons, Advisory Board

**Reviewed & Signed:**

- All Bills Outstanding Since Last Meeting
- All Payroll Outstanding Since Last Meeting

**Department Operations Update**

Mr. O'Brien reported on some work from Dig Safe that's finally happening. That's been outstanding for a while. There is also apparently a leak in the pH chemical tank. Mr. Palaia noted that it was assumed the leak was in the tank itself, but it appears to actually be in a pipe that feeds into it. The tank is substantial so emptying it to check further could be an issue. Regardless, it is in process for being fixed. Mr. Palaia then turned to an update on Pepperell taking over as the operator for the water system. They are very interested in pursuing this option under an inter-municipal agreement. They feel comfortable in their staffing ability as they just hired another licensed operator. They expect the cost to be about the same as what SWSS costs us, but they'll throw a few more things in to the contract including hydrant flushing, black flow testing, accounting for a number of emergency calls, and to provide a person to attend meetings of the Commission for updating. He then provided the Commission with some analysis that was provided by Pepperell. Mr. O'Brien was very happy with what they were accounting for as included. Particularly that they will cover at least 5 emergency calls a year. They are also willing to work closely with Highway Dept. assuming Highway is willing to work with them. Mr. Morton, briefly wearing his Roads Commissioner hat, felt confident that Highway would. Mr. O'Brien noted our base with SWSS is \$80,000, but with extra costs we pay over \$120,000. We'd see savings, but there would probably be some extras not accounted for that we'd pay for. Mr. Palaia recalled they would also store some extra equipment in Dunstable which would allow for improved response too. Mr. O'Brien agreed and submitted we also wouldn't have to worry about managing benefits as Pepperell would do all of that. We'd pay the \$80,000 to Pepperell as an assessment. Mr. Simmons agreed suggesting it would likely still be over the \$80,000 base with the odd extra, but certainly less than what's being paid now with SWSS since Pepperell is already saying they'll cover more under that base price. Mr. O'Brien agreed.

Mr. Palaia then went over the contract with SWSS noting a few provisions and its run. Pepperell is making the assumption we want to do this and they are already drafting the inter-municipal agreement. On our end the Commission would vote to enter into the agreement. They likely would be the same. It would be for 3 years with an additional 2 year option. Mr. Palaia then emphasized that they do have an ulterior motive. They intend to buy water from Dunstable if they can as part of their plans for addressing the PFAS problem they currently have. Mr. Morton noted we want to sell water to them, so that's good news for us. Mr. Palaia then elaborated further that Pepperell would likely seek to use their ARPA funding to build the interconnection needed. This would be

substantially cheaper than building a water treatment plant. Essentially, a \$3 million dollar project versus a \$10 million dollar one for them. Mr. Simmons then briefly recounted some of the history in Dunstable on the idea of selling water and how it's often resulted in controversy. Mr. O'Brien conceded it can be controversial but reminded those present that the option, although not always popular in Dunstable, would help generate revenue that might assist in offsetting the costs of the debt service for the Water Infrastructure Project.

### **Infrastructure Project Update**

Mr. Palaia outlined the research done by the Assessors and Nashoba regarding the concern that water ratepayers may leave the system by drilling wells. This is important as that could impact the town's ability to pay for the debt service. They determined upwards of 50 of the water ratepayers *might* be able to leave the system. But this was from an eagle eyed view, so while 5 might be able too, it's important to remember that it would likely be less as other considerations like proximity to neighbor's septic's wouldn't have necessarily have factored into this. Mostly they were looking at how many ratepayers had sufficiently sized parcels such that they might be able to have a septic and a well on the same lot. A property owner could theoretically have sufficient land, but they could also have other factors that would pose a problem. Mr. O'Brien stressed that while some have balked at the rate increases the reality is they've known this was coming for years and we had to increase the rates to pay the debt service. Mr. Morton agreed reminding that we had a public hearing, there were folks who attended and asked detailed questions, and again this was all presented at a town meeting explaining the project and the financing for it. None of this was done in secret and the project had to be done.

### **SWSS Update**

Mr. Palaia reported that the primary water operator assigned by SWSS to Dunstable, David Bray, is no longer with SWSS. There is a new operator being assigned named Stephen Bachand.

### **Next Meeting/Regular Meetings**

The next meeting is expected to be scheduled for November 17, 2021. Although given this meeting the Commission felt it likely that meeting would be scheduled either for November 24, 2021, or December 1, 2021.

### **Authorization of Accounts Payable & Payroll**

The Commission considered and signed off on all of its outstanding bills. The Commission then reviewed and approved payment of the bills and also signed all outstanding department payroll. Mr. O'Brien then briefly reported on all bills he'd reviewed and approved since the last meeting in his capacity as chair. He noted these are the usual ones, utilities, SWSS, alarm, and the like.

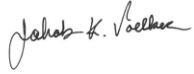
### **Minutes**

The Commission considered the minutes from its meeting held on September 29, 2021. Seeing no reason to modify the minutes the Commission determined to accept the minutes

A motion was made by Mr. Morton to approve the minutes of September 29, 2021 as written. The motion was seconded by Mr. O'Brien and passed by majority vote.

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Morton at 6:28 pm. The motion was seconded by Mr. O'Brien and passed by majority vote.

Respectfully submitted by

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jakob K. Voelker', written in a cursive style.

Jakob K. Voelker

Administrative Assistant, Dunstable Water Department